THE DEADLY BERMUDA TRIANGLE

by Ivan T. Sanderson, Aug. 1968.

The disappearance of ships, planes and submarines without a warning or trace now reveals a startling new pattern.

ANOTHER submarine has vanished. This is a terrible tragedy from the human point of view but, horrible as it may sound, there's nothing really unique about it. Ships have been going down since the dawn of maritime history. So have planes, and now space vehicles and submarines. So what was so exceptional about the disappearance of the *Scorpion?*

First, it was a nuclear-powered sub; second, it *could* have gone down in a sea country that is alleged to be of a very special and peculiar nature.

Many subs have just plain vanished, and not only in wartime. Two of them disappeared at the same time in the Mediterranean only a few months ago—one Israeli, the other French. Also, we have lost other nuclear-powered subs, such as the *Thresher.* Whenever a sub fails to surface, there is an emotional outburst. And why not, since almost all of us are basically claustrophobics. But sometimes there enters another ingredient in these sorry events—namely, mystery.

Just how to define this has not as yet been determined or even attempted. Why is it that the public singles out one horror from all the countless others that occur every day and concentrates on it to the exclusion of all else? As I say, submarines have been staying down since they were invented and there have been some very dramatic rescue stories, but when two go down in the same sea, as in the Mediterranean recently, the story just sort of dies away. The individual event, in fact, seems to be of less importance than the *place* where it occurs. Ships have been going down in the Mediterranean since long before Greek times; so have subs and planes. By the same token, all three classes of craft have been ditching in the North Atlantic one way or another for centuries. In fact, they have been going down all over the world, but only the maritime historians pay much attention. Yet, if so much as one dirty old freighter disappears in certain areas, thousands of people start speculating. In the case of our *Scorpion,* half the reading public of the world seems to have gone balmy. Why?

There is a sort of folklore building up about a certain area in the North Atlantic that has been tagged with a very catchy title: "The Bermuda Triangle." I am still not quite sure where this monicker originated but it was the popular writer, Vincent Gaddis, who first "put it on the map," as it were, in an article in ARGOSY in 1964. The inference here is that there is a roughly triangular area with sides running from Bermuda to central Florida and thence to Puerto Rico in which a large number of complete *disappearances,* rather than mere founderings of ships, have been recorded throughout the years, and over which an exceptional number of planes have simply vanished without a trace.

This is a glamorous notion, but I am afraid that, on proper analysis, it does not stand up. It is *not* a triangle, and its periphery is much greater than the one outlined above. In fact, if you will take a look at the map again, you will note the area in which such disappearances, or alleged disappearances, have been recorded forms a large, sort of lozenge-shaped area which is neither centered on the oceanic island of Bermuda nor can in any other way be depended from it. We have plotted all the "disappearances"—and please note that this is something quite different from mere sinkings of ships and submarines or ditchings of planes—reported from this area and have found that it slops way over the original so-called "triangle."

After this discovery, the question naturally arose as to the uniqueness of this funny blob, which extends from about thirty to forty degrees north latitude, and from about fifty-five to eighty-five degrees west. Was it unique?

It may sound silly to say so, but we knew already that there was at least one other such area alleged to exist. This lies some 250 miles south of the Japanese island of Honshu about Longitude 140 East. We therefore started to work gathering records of ships lost and planes vanishing around this point which, as a matter of fact, had up until now been only mentioned—and rather casually, at that. The outcome was not just amazing; it was posi-

tively startling. Plane after plane on its way south to Guam appears to have vanished, too, with disturbing frequency. So we started plotting again, and despite the usually very vague locations given—and no wonder, considering these ships and planes disappeared without radio signals or any trace—another lozenge-shaped blob came to light.

This startled us a bit, but then one of my colleagues had the brilliant idea of getting out a map of the world! Once we had a map before us, we saw that both lozenges lay precisely between thirty and forty north and also spread about thirty degrees east to west latitudinally. This really did spark us, so we made a concerted grab for a globe.

Now the surface of our earth as seen on a globe is really very different from what we look at on a two-dimensional map, and especially one on what is called the Mercator Projection. Just where did these two blobs lie relative to each other as one went around the globe? It turned out that they were 160 degrees apart (going around one way) and 200 degrees (going the other). In other words, there did not appear to be any noticeable pattern. If they had been at 180 degrees going both ways, they would have been exactly opposite each other on opposite sides of the earth. But then something else cropped up.

Since early this year, we have been inundated with letters asking for more information on the *disappearances* of the Israeli and French submarines at east and west ends of the Mediterranean respectively. We were naturally unable to add anything to the news reports and official statements. However, I think we do now have something to offer. The Mediterranean Sea just happens to form a lozenge-shaped blob, also lying between thirty and forty degrees north, and just about thirty degrees from left to right latitudinally.

Naturally, we measured the distances between these three blobs. Then something else rather startling came to light. They were arranged on an apparently strict numerical progression—between the Bermuda bit to the Mediterranean, four; the Mediterranean to the Japanese, five; and the Japanese to the Bermudan, six.

Now, I don't like such neat patterns emerging in anything in nature; it looks far too much as though we got the idea and then tried to fit the facts into it. You can fit almost anything into anything if you try hard enough, as any mathematician, statistician, or police officer can tell you. However, Nature is to a great extent *fairly* orderly and *does* display rather neat patterns.

So we had three in a line—and the same line, please note—of something. But just what?

What set these three areas apart from all others off land was that large concentrations of planes, ships and subs not only went down there, but that they vanished, leaving no trace. At this point, I started doing some hard thinking. If there are three such areas between thirty and forty degrees north latitude, could there be equivalents at thirty to forty degrees south latitude? A subsequent investigation into plane, ship, and sub losses in the Southern Hemisphere yielded some amazing results.

There turned out to be three exactly similar areas situated below the equator. These lie off the east coast of South America, South Africa and Australia. All proved to be precisely within thirty to forty degrees of latitude south, and also to be about thirty degrees of longitude in width. But *very* strangely, they also were all titled up to the right or east! Frankly, this does not seem to make sense, because our planet is a sphere and the Southern Hemisphere should *mirror* the Northern.

We started looking for some physical reason for this clear pattern. The first thing that emerged was that these vortices in the Southern Hemisphere were precisely shifted the same number of degrees to the east in all cases. Then one further fact did come to light.

Of all the possible known physical factors that could cause this pattern—temperature, barometric pressure and, above all, geomagnetic anomalies—only one does fit, and this is a particular feature of surface ocean currents!

Five of these six areas—the Mediterranean alone being in a different category—lie on the right or east sides of the continents, and all *precisely* in curious areas where hot surface ocean currents stream out of the tropical latitudes toward the colder waters of the temperate, subpolar and eventually polar areas. What is more, the two principal ones in the Northern Hemisphere, in accordance with the simple behavior of waters on a spinning globe, turn clockwise, while the three in the Southern Hemisphere turn counter-clockwise. There is nothing odd about this, but there is about the fact that said twirls all make their slightest turns precisely in these five locations—*and nowhere else in the world!*

As there is a very good scientific reason for these twirls of hot ocean currents being just where they are, anything strange or mysterious that is common to them should probably be an outcome of their existence. And do not for a moment think that the disappearance of planes, ships and subs is the *only* odd occurrence reported from these six areas (including the Mediterranean this time). Other oddities include the wild reports of poltergeist manifestations and an unusual incident of UFOs or flying saucers.

The tremendous popular interest in the Bermuda

Triangle was started by flying-saucer buffs, apparently for two reasons. First, a lot of UFOs have been reported from the skies over this area by utterly reliable flyers, both military and commercial. Second, even the most pompous "ufologist" still has a sneaking idea that flying saucers are machines and must therefore be made by very clever chaps who live elsewhere in the universe and come for one purpose or another. On this account, UFO buffs immediately claimed that this Bermuda Triangle was some kind of special place the "space people" had picked out to use as a sort of collection ground.

Actually, I have a strong feeling that this is nothing more than an old wives' tale.

That five of the six areas are where hot tropical surface waters jet in comparatively narrow streams into cold-water areas, though, *is* of enormous significance. These are the areas of extreme temperature variabilities which alone would predicate a very high incidence of violent marine and aerial disturbances. What more likely areas for storms and wrecks and founderings, and even magnetic anomalies? Moreover, since all these areas also happen to be major areas of human population and maritime enterprise, is it a small wonder that they would be those wherein the most losses of ships, planes and subs would be recorded? However, there still remains one really mysterious factor.

Planes, ships and subs have, as we have stressed, been disappearing all over the world. But it has to be admitted that many *more* are reported to have done so in these six areas than in any others; and, which is much more important, *the number of disappearances is out of all proportion to such recorded losses anywhere else.* This is the point upon which not only our Navy, but a lot of other navies, maritime commissions and even Lloyd's of London have become baffled.

When a ship or plane sinks into the sea, *something* almost invariably comes back to the surface. A large liner goes down, and it may be a month before so much as one wooden deck chair surfaces; a small plane ditches, and the whole area is immediately covered with an oil slick, then all sorts of bits and pieces surface within an hour. But these are ditchings, founderings, sinkings or just plain wrecks. Disappearances are something else. In our six mysterious areas, planes, ships and subs just *vanish;* not a trace remains. What is more, there is a quite uncanny sudden cutoff of radar and radio contact.

I would like to state that the disproportionately high number of losses in the six "vile vortices" is due only to the fact that they fall in very rough areas of contrary currents, winds, temperature inversions and so forth, but I am afraid I can not do so. Allowing for all of these, we still have to explain this business of disappearances per se. And this is where the flying-saucer boys seem to have us over a barrel.

Since we never get any facts as to just what did happen in these cases, how can we even start to try to explain them? The services, and notably the air forces and navies, know perfectly well that there is something "not right" about this, but they haven't any more idea than we have as to what it could be. Thus, the picture is wide open to suggestions—most unfortunately, particularly from those who have none of the known facts. As I have said above, the most vociferous are the UFO buffs who have suggested that these "vortices" are sort of holes where gravity, earth magnetism and perhaps other natural features are weaker or otherwise different from those elsewhere around the surface of our planet. They have then proceeded from this assumption to the speculation that extraterrestrial intelligencies may know of these anomalies and have picked these vortices through which to descend upon us and collect specimens of us and our machines.

While I am no longer willing to say that anything is *impossible,* I have the gravest doubts about all such theories. Admittedly, there is a very great deal that is odd about these six lozenge-shaped areas, but there are enough *known* natural oddities about them (that we do not yet fully understand) to possibly account for all the strange happenings therein.

What *do* we really know of the gravitational, electromagnetic and other effects of a gigantic whirlpool—or maelstrom—of water? What of the location of not only the water itself, but of other elements dissolved in it? Look what's turning up in the foggy field of dowsing, for example. How do we know what gravitational anomalies may not be projected *upward* in such areas that might black out compasses and/or cause some natural phenomenon that sort of opens up our space-time-continuum and lets planes and other things "drop out"? And, we might add, that allows all sorts of odd junk to *drop in* as well?

This, you may rightly say, is getting quite "far out." I agree, but will somebody please come up with an explanation, or even a suggestion as to just where all these planes, ships, and possibly submarines, *did* go?